GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3173
ANSWERED ON:12.03.2003
INDIAN COMMUNITY UNDER THREAT IN VENEZUELA
VINAY KUMAR SORAKE

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a contingent of Indian workers, skilled in oil rigging operation, was requisitioned by the Venezuelan Government due to the on-going strike by local oil riggers in Venezuela;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the engagement of Indian workmen had caused much resentment and riots in Venezuela, posing a threat to the Indian community living there; and

(d) if so, the details thereof alongwith the present status of the situation?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA)

(a) Yes. A group of six Indian oil tanker crew (not for oil rigging operations) was recruited by the Venezuelan State Oil Corporation (PDVSA) through an agency in Mumbai.

(b), (c) & (d) PDVSA had brought six oil tanker crew directly from India through an agency in Mumbai on 15 December, 2002 to operate their tankers, because the Venezuelan crew had joined the general strike of the Opposition seeking the exit of President Chavez of Venezuela. The Venezuelan Opposition, including the PDVSA employees, who were on strike, reacted adversely to this development and organised a demonstration in front of the Indian Embassy on 15 December, 2002. This had caused concern to the Indian community in Venezuela. The Indian crew had, however, been relieved the very next day at their request as they feared for their own safety. The general strike was withdrawn in the first week of February 2003 and the controversy about the Indian crew has died down.